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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: ALBANIAN FM BASHA'S JUNE 1 VISIT TO
SKOPJE

REF: SKOPJE 404

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) During his first official visit to Skopje June 1, Albanian Foreign Minister Basha and FM Milososki discussed their hopes for a positive US signal on NATO membership for Adriatic Charter aspirants during President Bush's upcoming visit to Tirana. They considered stronger cooperation on EU membership issues, including FM Milososki's proposal for a memorandum of cooperation between their respective EU integration secretariats. Both ministers publicly reiterated their support for the Ahtisaari plan for Kosovo and for an implementing UNSCR. The discussions with FM Basha underscored the GOM's desire to demonstrate, in advance of President Bush's visit to Tirana, its constructive approach to ties with its neighbors and its consistent support for a speedy resolution of Kosovo's status. End summary

LOOKING FOR A STRONG SIGNAL FROM THE US ON NATO MEMBERSHIP

12. (SBU) During his June 1 visit to Skopje, Albanian FM Basha met with FM Milososki to discuss bilateral relations and both countries' shared NATO and EU membership aspirations. According to MFA State Counselor Shenol Devaya, Milososki told Basha that President Bush's June 10 visit to Albania and his planned lunch meeting with the Adriatic Charter prime ministers would send a positive signal to Albania, Croatia and Macedonia concerning their hopes for NATO membership invitations in 2008. Local media also reported that both ministers expected the President's visit to the region would provide a boost to their NATO candidacies.

COOPERATION ON EU MEMBERSHIP ISSUES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

13. (SBU) Milososki proposed signing a memorandum of cooperation between the GOA and GOM on EU integration issues, which FM Basha reportedly said he would consider. The memorandum would call for increased coordination and communication between the EU integration secretariats of both countries, and would be modeled on similar agreements the GOM has entered into with Slovenia and Croatia. Both ministers pledged to increase bilateral cooperation in all fields, according to Devaya, with a focus on development of regional infrastructure to support increased economic development.

CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR KOSOVO

14. (U) FM Milososki and FM Basha reiterated, both privately and publicly, their continued support for the Ahtisaari plan

for Kosovo, and agreed that a UNSCR was the best way forward for ensuring stability and security in the region, according to MFA officials. They also agreed that any delay in reaching a final decision on Kosovo's status would threaten to destabilize the region. (NOTE: Local press reported that the Government of Serbia quickly responded through diplomatic channels to the ministers' public statements in support of the Ahtisaari plan and a UNSCR, reportedly claiming that the statements reflected interference in Serbia's internal affairs. END NOTE.)

COMMENT

15. (SBU) FM Milososki's positive meetings with FM Basha were followed immediately by Kosovo PM Ceku's June 2 visit to Skopje, during which Ceku met with PM Gruevski and his eAlbanian coalition partner, DPA VP Menduh Thaci. Both sets of discussions appeared timed to demonstrate, in advance of President Bush's visit to Tirana, the GOM's constructive ties with its neighbors and its consistent and public support for the Ahtisaari plan and a UNSCR.
MILOVANOVIC